



CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LT. GOVERNOR

THOMAS A. TURCO, III
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121

www.mass.gov/dfs



PETER J. OSTROSKEY
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

TO: Heads of Fire Departments

FROM: Peter J. Ostroskey, State Fire Marshal

DATE: February 1, 2019

Re: Fourth Generation Nerve Agents

New resources are available from the U.S. government to help emergency responders and healthcare workers develop specific guidance and training to protect themselves and save lives during incidents involving fourth generation nerve agents, also known as Novichoks or A-series nerve agents. The resources are available on the Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management (CHEMM) website at <https://chemm.nlm.nih.gov/nerveagents/FGA.htm>.

After the incidents in the United Kingdom in 2018 involving a fourth generation agent, the White House National Security Council convened a federal interagency working group to identify and develop resources to help the emergency response community prepare for and respond to a fourth generation agent incident if one ever occurs in the U.S. The resources are available for U.S. emergency response professionals seeking to learn more about the agent used in the U.K. and how to protect themselves and respond if such incidents ever occur in their communities. No illicit use or manufacture of a fourth generation agent or other nerve agent is known to have occurred in the U.S., and there is no known threat of nerve agent use in the U.S.

The following resources were developed and tailored to various segments of the emergency response community and are available on the CHEMM website:

- *Safety Awareness for First On-Scene Responders Bulletin* – Designed to educate and prepare first responders for situations when law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services personnel are first to arrive on scene and initially may be unaware that a fourth generation agent is present. This bulletin will assist departments and agencies develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.

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- *Reference Guide* – Designed to educate and prepare hazardous materials response teams, the guide includes chemical and physical properties of fourth generation agents, as well as detection, firefighting, personal protective equipment, and decontamination recommendations for situations when responding to a known or suspected fourth generation agent incident. This guide will assist hazardous materials response teams develop specific guidance and training to enhance overall preparedness efforts.
- *Medical Management Guidelines* – Designed to educate and prepare fire, EMS, and hospital staff and guide the medical management of patients exposed or potentially exposed to a fourth generation agent.

Each DFS district hazmat team will be conducting specific training to educate members on the characteristics, effects and response to these agents. I am confident that the personnel assigned to each team have the knowledge, resources and skills to respond safely and effectively if such an incident was to occur.

For questions, please contact David DiGregorio, Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Division Director, at 978-567-3117 or by email: david.digregorio@state.ma.us directly.